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REMARKS

In the Office Action, claims 1-21 are rejected. Claim 1 has been amended. Reconsideration is requested.

Claims 1-8 and 10-20 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Garrison et al. (US 5,972,030). Applicants traverse the rejections.

Claim 1 has been amended to include the limitations that the handle coupling is slidably mounted to the holder body, that the opening in the handle coupling is slidable relative to the holder body between a lock position and an unlock position, and that the handle coupling includes a release mechanism to move the handle coupling between the lock and unlock positions.

Garrison does not disclose these limitations. In Garrison, the handle coupling is attached to the handle, not slidably mounted to the holder body. Further, the handle coupling is not slidably movable relative to the holder between a lock and an unlock position as presently claimed. In addition, the release mechanism in Garrison is not included on the handle coupling, but rather is on the handle, removed from the holder. Thus, Garrison does not anticipate claims 1-8 and 10-20.

Withdrawal of the rejections of claims 1-8 and 10-20 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Garrison et al. is requested.

Claims 9 and 21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Garrison et al. (US 5,972,030) in view of Rhee et al. (US 6,019,739). Applicants traverse the rejections.

As discussed above, Garrison does not meet all of the claim limitations. In Garrison, the handle coupling is attached to the handle, not mounted to the holder. Further, the handle coupling is not slidably movable relative to the holder between a lock and an unlock position as presently claimed. In addition, the release mechanism in Garrison is not included on the handle coupling, but rather is on the handle, removed from the holder. Rhee does not supply these deficiencies.

Withdrawal of the rejections of claims 9 and 21 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as

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being unpatentable over Garrison et al. (US 5,972,030) in view of Rhee et al. is requested.

The handle can be removed easily during implant of the annuloplasty ring by actuating a button on the holder body. This allows the annuloplasty ring to be sutured to the native tissue without interference from the handle or requiring the handle to be secured to prevent excessive force from being applied onto the holder body.

In view of the amendments and reasons provided above, it is believed that all pending claims are in condition for allowance. Applicant respectfully requests favorable reconsideration and early allowance of all pending claims.

If a telephone conference would be helpful in resolving any issues concerning this communication, please contact Applicant's attorney of record, Hallie A. Finucane at 612-330-0587.

The Director is authorized to charge any fee deficiency required by this paper or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 23-1123.

Respectfully submitted,

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